EDUCATIONAL BUREAU

Under Direction of KATE MARKHAM POWER.

Of course, every citizen of the State who has to make annual outlay for text-books is interested in the passage of a bill providing a uniform system throughout the State. And as every patron of the high and common schools has to make this outlay, the result is that many thousands are intently watching the actions of their representatives on this question.

Levee matters interest those of our people who dwell beside the mighty Mississippi; the oyster questions, and the matter of boundary betwixt us and our fair neighbor, Louisiana, affect the dwellers on the coast; the lumber business and the turpentine manufactories, with the many questions incident, are of vital import to the great Southeast. Thus it is throughout the State, each section having her own special interests to watch over. But the question of text-books (and the contents of the text-books) interests every section, irrespective of location, and the people will not content themselves with anything short of the best efforts of the two houses along this line.

As I wrote last week, the senate had a long, hard fight over their bills, and finally united on and passed an excellent one. The composition of the commission, however, is far from agreeable to many of the lawmakers. It is urged by some that the governor has no real authority, but that he would be held responsible before the people for the actions of the commission. This, if the case, should be remedied, and probably will be, while the matter is before the house. Representative Cowley, of Monroe county, has offered an amendment to the bill which meets with much favor. His amendment provides: "In all future adoptions of school books by county boards that the prices made by publishers to the counties in Mississippi shall be as low as those made to any State, county, or municipality in the United States under similar conditions." To many, this seems the solution of what has proven a difficult problem. The chief question involved is that of prices, and the above seems to remedy this difficulty, as it fixes, absolutely, a minimum price for all school books to be used in the common schools and the graded schools of Mississippi. The amendment has many friends who claim that it will cure all difficulties and will preserve to the counties their own supreme rights in matters educational.

What Superintendent Whitfield Says.

Our able superintendent, Mr. Whitfield, was asked by the reporters today to say something for the use of the press relative to the large appropriation for public schools made by this legislature. He was asked, at the same time, for an estimate of the total school funds that would be available for the biennial period. In order that his reply may reach the people who are most concerned, it is given place in these columns. He said:

"The house bill passed by the senate yesterday, appropriating $1,250,000 from the State treasury for the public schools, is an increase over the appropriation of two years ago of the total poll tax of the State. This latter sum last year was $304,000, but because of the paying of poll tax for the next two years will not affect the right of suffrage in this State, the consequence will be that the poll tax for the period in question will show a falling off. A conservative estimate of what will be received from this source annually for the next two years is $275,000, or $550,000 for the entire period. The superintendent's report just issued shows that the sum of $1,860,000 was expended on the common schools last year. The boards of supervisors in twelve counties have, for the first time, levied taxes for the extension of the school term. About twenty counties that have heretofore been levying taxes for this purpose have increased their levy, and a number of towns have establisned separate school districts, which will increase the amounts previously collected from such local sources for the schools. The total funds available for common schools during the present year will approximate $2,250,000. This will insure an average school term for the State of about six months.

"The agitation for better schools will be continued. The necessity for better school houses will be especially emphasized, and better trained teachers. The teachers of the State will be organized into professional reading circles, courses of study will be outlined by the department of education of the university," etc.

All of the plans mentioned in the above paragraph will be outlined in these columns from time to time, and it is earnestly hoped that great enthusiasm may be aroused throughout our limits. Nothing of great moment can be achieved without a goodly amount of that magical motive power, and to be effective it should have fresh fuel given it continually. This we hope to be able to do.

Rural School Houses.

Just here it seems opportune to copy a brief extract from a letter which I found today in one of the leading publications of the great Methodist congregation. It describes one of the rural school houses(?) in the hill section of Northeast Mississippi, where, the writer truthfully says, dwell the kindest, truest and warmest-hearted people to be met with anywhere; and where is found nerve, brain, strength of body and of mind to enrich our State and our national life immeasurably, if the right training is supplied. The writer says: "The common schools here are, necessarily, not of a high grade, chiefly because they run in most instances only four or five months in the year. The country school houses are a disgrace to the people, and could not be utilized anywhere else than in this land of warmth and sunshine. They are merely hulls—and very shabby hulls, sometimes, with rough floor and rougher walls, and the roughest sort of roof, minus even a pretense of ceiling. For windows, they use holes in the wall, which, in time of rain are closed by drawing a shutter which is made of a rough plank, hung on leather hinges." Just such houses as these must our grand pioneers have built, except that massive, well seasoned logs were then used and, in many instances, still stand, where now we use the hasitly sawed, unseasoned boards, which immediately begin to draw away from each other—whether in disgust or from the laudable desire to let the air and sunshine in to coquet with the lads and lassies, of course we cannot say.

The fact remains that the picture, as drawn above, is an excellent likeness of many of our rural schools—schools, by the way, in which some of our brightest children sit, and where, thanks to the pure grit of the young teachers and the simple life and clear brain of the children, our great men and women are getting their start in life. Of course the children can do nothing, and the poorly paid teacher very little, to improve the houses, though in some districts I know it to be a fact that the teacher has been the largest contributor to the erection of a more comfortable building than the one which they had occupied. Once built, she continued the good example by buying appliances and aids to study, but in this, I regret to say, she had a monopoly.

There is one thing, however, that the children can do, and I earnestly hope that the parents who read these columns will encourage and discuss, in the home circle, the subject of beautifying the grounds about the school house. It is not as though the children had the barren wastes of the Southwest to deal with, or the treeless stretches of the Northwest. Neither have they the granite hills, nor rock-ribbed fields of the Northeast. They have right at their feet the garden spot of our beautiful land, and they can do so much to add to its beauty and thus learn from the work much that will benefit them and brighten their surroundings. We are now making arrangements with a company in Boston by which we hope to inaugurate the systematic work of beautifying rural school houses and grounds in all parts of the State, offering prizes, etc., for the various degrees of attractiveness achieved, and, generally, rousing the children to a sense of their great privileges and possible pleasures.

On the subject of school houses Superintendent Whitfield has many good things to say in that report which is as full of good things as a nut is of meat. Among them is this:

"It is impossible to maintain good schools in uncomfortable houses, and it will be impossible to have the schools that we ought to have so long as our houses are as uncomfortable as they are. Our school houses should not only be comfortable in cold and hot weather, but in their construction the laws of heating, ventilation and lighting should be observed. Our school houses should not only be comfortable, and from a sanitary point well constructed, but as far as possible they ought to be made attractive. It does not cost any more to construct a building of good architectural features than it does to construct an unsightly house containing the same materials. The educational value of a beautiful house cannot be calculated. Its refining influence soon becomes manifest in the children's adoption of higher ideals.

"I think there should be a law passed requiring the State board of education to have prepared a number of plans for up-to-date school houses, and to require that every school that biulds a new school house adopt one of these plans if it desires to participate in the public fund.

"I do not think that money could be better expended than for the State to make an appropriation for school houses as an encouragement to the patrons of the schools to build new school houses. No appropriation sholud be made to a district except on condition that the district raise the larger part of the money. This would, furthermore, encourage the permanent location of school houses."

Training School.

I believe I am correct in the statement that our own is, with one exception, the only State which has failed to make some provision for the great mass of its rural teachers—the advance guard of prosperity and culture, wherever it forges its difficult way; for, in my humble opinion, this State owes more to her country school teachers than she does to any other one class of her citizens—more, even, than to the preachers and the press. She must be preacher as well as teacher, and in too many instances she is the only link connecting her pupils with what is best in the press. I have believed for many years that a large percentage of our country school teachers ought to be given the salary of missionaries in addition to what they earn as teachers, and a few of them deserve monuments as high and as pure and as everlasting as that lonely, snow-clad peak that stands sentinel in the far north of California—Shasta, the beautiful mountain. But greatly as I value and highly as I appreciate the work of the country school teacher in Mississippi, I realize the need of better advantages for her, and join my voice in pleading that she, too, may have the privilege of a training for her work.

We Need Your Help.

The educators who inaugurated this plan of getting into direct and weekly communication with the people had no intention of monopolizing all the time and space devoted to this cause. Rather do they desire, and hope, to hear from others who have the education of our children at heart. Whether you are teacher or parent, or even pupil, we will be glad to have your views on any pertinent subject, and will reproduce in these columns such matter as we think would prove a benefit to the public or to the cause of education.

Incidents in Life of Turquoise King.

The turquoise king is dead. A career of thrilling adventures and hairbreadth escapes, a life in which the smile of fortune came at the most unexpected times and places, has been ended, like the lives of so many others bearing royal title, by the assassin's bullet.

George Simmons, the turquoise king, was a frequent visitor to Denver during the latter years of his life. Mr. Simmons was murdered on October 15 at Manvel, Cal., an isolated mining town near the Nevada line. While getting into a wagon to drive home he was shot and instantly killed by W. H. Miller, a foreman whom he had discharged a year or so ago.

The discovery of his mine was an example of his keen scent for the unusual. Riding through the Crescent mountains in the Mojave district one day, he noticed at a little distance a slight elevation or mound which, although, perhaps, undisturbed for centuries, had apparently been built by human hands. A closer examination of the heterogenous materials composing the mound convinced him of its artificial character, and as it was too large for an ordinary grave, he determined to investigate further. Digging down into the center of the mound, he came upon a stone and later complete sets of rude stone tools used in mining by uncivilized persons. Continuing the excavation, he opened up the workings of an ancient mine and the deposits of turquoise which afterwards brought him wealth.

For years he kept the location of the mine a secret, working it in desultory manner. The property was not patented, and lest some wandering prospectors should run upon it by accident he built a stockade around it and kept a man with a Winchester on guard night and day. People who tried to learn the location of his mine by following him into the desert found that it was a dangerous business. For instance, there was Jim McClurg, one of the first men whose acquaintance Simmons had made in Denver. Unknown to Simmons, McClurg boarded the same train with the owner of the mine and followed him to Nevada. Simmon's quick eye, however, caught a glimpse of McClurg as the later got down from the rear end of the train at their destination, and the Denver man was promptly warned that a bullet would stop him if he attempted to follow Simmons to the mine.

On Simmons's first visits to Denver he used to bring with him a large traveling grip filled with turquoises. The stones were pale blue in color, while those from the old mines in New Mexico were dark blue, and at first it was hard to find buyers for the products of Simmons's mine. Now the light blue stones are the favorites and find a ready sale.

Failing to get enough money from the sale of turquoises to patent the property and develop it, Simmons went to London to secure capital. He put a valuation of $700,000 on his mine and floated it on that basis, although it was really worth three times that amount.—Denver Times.

Virginia and the Butler.

She was sweet, seven and Southern. When her family moved to New York there were surprises in plenty for little Virginia. Virginia's meals in the old homestead had always been served by akinky-haired "uncle" or turbaned "auntie," and the realm of white domestics was as yet unknown to her. Soon after coming to New York she was invited to luncheon by a neighbor, whose establishment was conducted along smart, up-to-date lines altogether foreign to the little Dixie girl's home life. Now, the most imposing member of the servants' staff in this house is an imported "Jeems"—a regular Du Maurier type, from the trim of his mutton chop whiskers to the tips of his polished boots. His dignity is enough to awe an ambassador, so Virginia's hostess thought it only natural that her small guest should accept the butler's services at luncheon with shy glances and tmid "Thank yous." It was only at Virginia's home dinner that the secret of her timidity leaked out, when somebody inquired how she had enjoyed her luncheon party.

"Oh, it was lovely!" she exclaimed. "There were the most beautiful flowers and china and the nicest things I ever ate, and the young ladies wore pretty dresses and were as kind to me as could be; but"—she hung her voice to a shocked whisper—"they certainly were mean to their father. Why, mamma, they kept him passing things all during the meal; never let him sit down a minute or eat a bite, and every time the doorbell rang the poor man had to answer it. They may be rich, but don't tell me they don't make their father work!"—Harper's Magazine.

Towne—"Senator Dullard seems to have acquired quite a reputation as a wit." Browne—"Yes, he was interviewed once by a bright reporter."—Philadelphia Press.

"Is Mr. Lovejoy still paying attention to your daughter?" "Indeed, he isn't paying any attention to her at all." "Why? Did he jilt her?" "No, he married her."—Yonkers Herald.